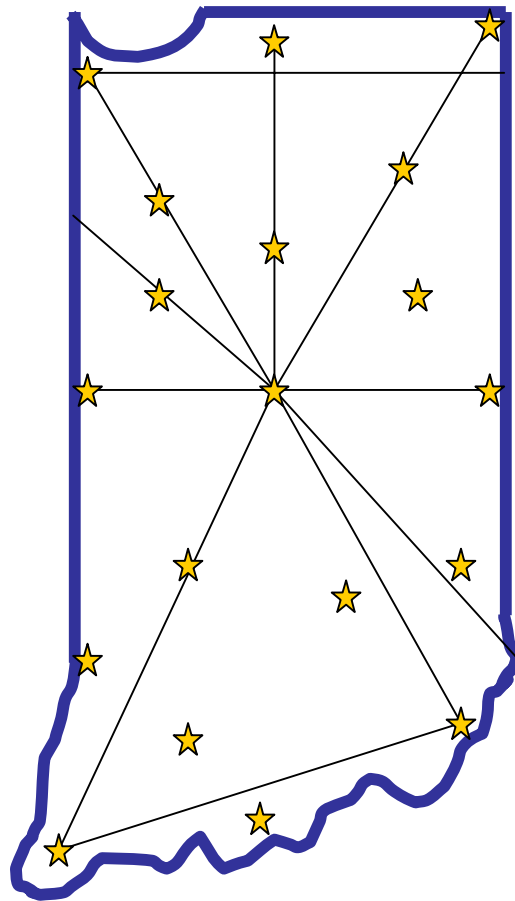


Empowering Communities through Service and Volunteerism: Designing a Roadmap for the Future



“Everybody has gifts and everybody has needs. When you blend the two, that’s what it takes to build a community.”

Judy O’Bannon, First Lady of Indiana

“I believe that ‘survival of the most cooperative’ will replace ‘survival of the fittest’.”

Naeemah Jackson, Manager of Art Education, Indianapolis Museum of Art¹

The Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism challenges the people of Indiana to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism. We identify and mobilize resources, promote an ethic of service, and develop in communities the capacity to solve problems and improve the quality of life for all individuals and families.

ICCSV Mission Statement

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline a workable concept related to the planning stages of the ICCSV’s eight regional summits. In partnership with organizations from the Indianapolis area, we hope this proposal will serve as a mechanism to develop a successful working model throughout the state. The content of this paper is subject to revision.

Helping Communities Transform

Where We Are: An Assessment

Over the last decade, state and local leaders in government, business, higher education, and other civic organizations have acknowledged that Indiana’s economic and social future depends upon strong, viable communities. While our communities strive to keep pace with the majority of national trends, many stand at the crossroads of the twenty-first century forced to ask critical questions about the future. Chief among them: How do communities build capacity within the existing infrastructure to sustain *community* and empower citizens to assume greater responsibility in making their cities and towns even better places to live, work, play, and raise a family? To do this we must foster awareness of opportunities to serve through the development of sustainable infrastructures that enhance citizen involvement in the formulation of innovative solutions to community needs.

Throughout Indiana’s history, leaders in our state have called upon fellow Hoosiers to volunteer their time, energy, and resources to resolve a myriad of social, economic, and political problems. Each day thousands of volunteers across Indiana perform innumerable good works that improve the lives of others and their communities by responding to local needs with solution-based activities. Yet, many communities across our state lack a formalized framework for mobilizing the necessary human resources, which are indispensable to maximizing and sustaining civil society. Until now, no system prevailed to comprehensively manage, evaluate, and recognize the fine work

¹ Borrowed from the 2001 Annual Report published by the Peace Learning Center. Indianapolis, Indiana.

achieved by Indiana's voluntary sector. A critical step toward addressing the fundamental challenges that communities face is to develop collaborative partnerships that communicate, coordinate, and connect resources to needs through statewide coordination and training.

Statewide organizations and local leaders helped identify gaps within community volunteer infrastructures and set out to make the connection through the Unified State Plan by delineating the following challenges common to many communities.

- Promote the role of service and volunteerism to communities across the state through the enhancement of volunteer centers
- Build community by creating an ethic of service among all Hoosiers
- Create opportunities to connect individuals across the state through networking events
- Aid communities in meeting the challenges caused by decreased services as a result of federal, state, and local budget cuts
- Work with communities to develop a synergy through a connectedness of various local programs
- Host a training event that encourage local level collaboration – bring together the “building blocks” of organizations
- Prepare Indiana communities to meet future challenges through civic engagement
- Share information (best practices, statewide resources, etc.)
- Transfer knowledge and experiences

What We Propose

The ICCSV will convene eight one-day regional summits in Evansville, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, New Albany, Richmond, South Bend, Terre Haute, and West Lafayette.

Four objectives are central to the design of these eight summits. Every community will:

- Connect participants and communities to the three priority issue areas established in the USP – **Education, Citizenship, and Community Development/Empowerment**
- Provide an opportunity to knit together strong or stronger community partnerships among local organizations and individuals – **communication, coordination, and collaboration**
- Generate the motivation to relate priority issue areas to unmet community needs. As a result of this process, the community might create a plan that better utilizes existing volunteers and generates additional volunteers. The Summit will strongly encourage participants to take back to their communities ideas stimulated from the dialogue, resource materials, etc.
- Link organizations and individual to information and knowledge through the sharing and receiving of data, techniques, best practices, resources, experiences, etc.)

THEME (Possibilities)	“Road Map to the Future”; “Transforming Our Communities: A Road Map”; “Empowering Communities through Service and Volunteerism: Designing a Roadmap for the Future”
DATES	The first summit will occur on August 19, 2003.
TIME	Each summit will be a one-day event . The day will commence at 9:00 a.m. and will conclude at approximately 4:00 p.m.
VENUES	The first summit will occur in Indianapolis on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis . The ICCSV will invite colleges and universities in the remaining regions to host a regional summit.
PARTICIPANTS	<p>Diverse Group of Six (6) Community Leaders selected by a local United Way from any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Representative of Local Government ▪ A Representative from the Philanthropic Community (Community and/or Family Foundation) ▪ A Representative from the Private Sector (Business/Industry/Chamber of Commerce) ▪ A Representative from a Labor Organization or a Community Activist ▪ A Representative from a Community-Based Organization (Secular or Faith-Based) ▪ A Representative from a Community Development Corporation, a Neighborhood Association, and/or a Community Action Program ▪ A Representative from an Educational Institution (K-12; Higher Education) ▪ A Representative from the Arts Community <p>Plus, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Representative from a National Service Program (Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and/or Learn and Serve America) ▪ A Recipient of a service or community program ▪ Two Senior Citizens ▪ Two Youth (12-18)

Ensuring Success

The ICCSV believes that success hinges upon these factors.

- **Select Dynamic Community Leaders.** The future of Indiana’s local communities cannot rest solely on the shoulders of selected or self-appointed leaders. Community is dependent upon the support of active and engaged citizens who consistently exercise their individual responsibilities for the collective good. The success of efforts to empower individuals and develop communities is due to comprehensive community partnerships between local institutions and citizens involved in their communities.

The ICCSV proposes to utilize local United Way agencies to identify and select summit participants (community delegations). The choice of United Ways to facilitate this process is due to several important factors.

- United Way agencies are respected institutions and viewed often as the leader in a community.
- United Way operates independent agencies in each of Indiana's ninety-two counties.
- United Way agencies are well networked (comprehensive community partnerships).
- United Ways understand the needs of a community. In partnership with local organizations and individuals, agencies conduct annual or bi-annual assessments of needs and assets.
- United Ways understand the value of volunteerism and community service. A number of agencies house or sponsor Volunteer Action Centers or similar programs. United Ways sponsor annual Days of Caring, which rely heavily on local volunteers.
- In most instances, the largest grantmaking entity in a community is the local United Way agency.

The ICCSV will invite United Ways to select six (6) individuals from one of twelve (12) community groups. In addition, the ICCSV asks agencies to invite two senior citizens, two youth, a recipient of a service or community programs, and a representative of a national service program. The ICCSV establishes the following selection criteria:

- The community views the representative as a local leader.
- The representative is committed to the success of their local community.
- The representative is involved in the community as a volunteer.
- The representative views solutions from a team approach.

United Ways should select six (6) representatives from organizations that represent particular community needs. For example, a community whose identified needs are literacy, self-sufficiency, and housing might select representatives from local government, education, business, labor, development corporation, and community and/or faith-based organization. The ICCSV predetermined the other six (6) representatives due to the fact that individuals within these categories might be overlooked as potential participants.

- ***Give Communities Tools, Allow Them to Chart the Course.*** As mentioned previously, the USP is more than a documented plan or a set of abstract ideas. It is a process convening institutions and individuals to assess where they have

been, where they are, where they want to go, and most importantly, how they get there.

At a morning plenary session participants will:

- Understand the historical importance of volunteers and national service programs in the United States and Indiana
- Learn about Indiana's Unified State Plan for Service (USP)
- Hear from representatives of successful community models that integrate service (civic engagement) in community development and empowerment projects

After a brief break, participants will attend two breakout sessions of their choice (or roundtables) hosted by various statewide organizations and government agencies. Potential hosts might include: Indiana Department of Commerce, Indiana Rural Development Council, ICCSV, Indiana 2016, Youth As Resources, Youth Philanthropy Initiative of Indiana, FaithWorks, Indiana Humanities Council/Indiana Arts Commission, Indiana Association of Volunteer Centers, etc. The ICCSV will allot one hour for each session. A one-hour networking lunch will follow.

In the afternoon, community delegations will meet. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Dialogue about needs in the local community
- Identify local assets
- Discuss potential ideas for connecting local issues to education, citizenship, community development/empowerment
- Implement a plan of action involving community partners in attendance; list other potential partners not at the table (media, etc.)
- Choose an organization or an individual who will assume responsibility for convening participants and soliciting community support when the delegation returns home

To conclude the event, local delegations will highlight their discussions and present their action plans.

When delegates return home, the ICCSV hopes that they will:

- Host a community meeting that begins the process of creating a community vision – Did the delegation accurately identify the needs in the community?
- Host a series of dialogues that focus on community issues
- Brainstorm community actions centered on education, citizenship, and community development/empowerment –

What will be different as a result of our vision, ideas, and plan of action?

Finally, to ensure success, the ICCSV will serve as a facilitator when called upon. Therefore, it must operate according to the following principles.

- **Value** community empowerment as a democratic course of action between local citizens and stakeholders.
 - **Appreciate** the uniqueness of each individual community, its assets, and its needs. There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach.
 - **Respect** the decisions adopted by a community.
 - **Assist** only when asked. When asked, adopt the role of facilitator.
 - **Serve** as a resource and consultant
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- ***Be a Source of Information for Communities.*** In addition to the informational roundtables and booths, the ICCSV will work with statewide and local organizations to create resource materials for participants that include data, best practices, and other useful information, including government and non-governmental grant programs. The Commission, with assistance from interns, will gather and disseminate information on a wide array of subjects ranging from evaluation methods to volunteer recruitment (resource library, page on the ICCSV Web site.) The Commission will serve as a “one-stop” system for local and statewide information on volunteerism and community empowerment. The ICCSV will keep communities connected through its monthly *Friday Night Fax* publication and its Web site.
 - ***Follow up, Follow up, Follow up.*** It is imperative to the success of the USP that the ICCSV contact local representatives on a consistent basis to determine where the community is in the process, and what assistance, if any, the community needs. The ICCSV will host a statewide conference on service and volunteerism in October 2003, which will serve as a follow up for those communities participating in the August summit.